W H S WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS W H S

Records of Meetings of the Washtenaw Historical Society

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LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE*
May 16, 1947

Officers and members of historical societies in Michigan attended a conference on local history held on the University of Michigan campus in the West Conference Room of the Rackham Building and the Anderson Room of the Michigan Union, on Friday, May 16, 1947. Mrs. Ray Spokes, vice-president of the Washtenaw Historical Society, Dr. Lewis Beeson, secretary of the Michigan State Historical Commission, and Mr. Henry Brown, assistant director of the Detroit Historical Society, presided at the speakers' table. Mrs. Spokes introduced Dr. Beeson who had made the local arrangements for this first conference on local history in Michigan.

Dr. Lewis Beeson stated that, although the Constitution of the State Historical Society provides that at the annual meeting of the Society there shall be reports from the various historical societies in the state, usually on the annual programs there has been space left for reports from local societies which have seldom been given. Consequently, many people interested in local historical societies who have attended the annual meetings of the State Historical Society may have felt dissatisfied with the programs. "This conference today," said Dr. Beeson, "is intended to remedy that situation and substitute for some of the missing reports. I feel that you people have enough activity to warrant at least one day a year being spent on it. I hope that after today you will go home convinced that we should continue these meetings and make them an annual occurrence. The meeting today has been purposely kept an informal affair. I believe we can get much from this type of program."

Mr. Henry Brown, acting as chairman during the ensuing discussion, requested those present to rise and name themselves in order that the assembled group might become better acquainted with each other. A list of the representatives from the various local historical societies attending the conference is appended to this report. The representatives were then called upon by Mr. Brown to discuss the activities of their societies.

Mr. Jayno Adams, president of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society, talked on the Governor Moses Wisner homestead, a recent acquisition of the Oakland County Society. Pictures of the Wisner home, which had been in the possession of the family for more than a hundred years, were passed among the audience. Those who were not present at the meeting may read Mr. Adams' account of the project in the March, 1947, issue of Michigan History (pp. 10-12). Following

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*These meetings reported by Mrs. Jane T. Lemish, of the Michigan Historical Collections of the University.

this talk, the group discussed some of the problems encountered in locating, purchasing, repairing, and restoring historic homesteads which might be suitable headquarters for a local historical society. Ventures similar to the project of the Oakland County Society were briefly mentioned: Mrs. P. E. Skinner, president of the Ladies Literary Club of Ypsilanti, spoke of the lovely old home maintained by the club in Ypsilanti; Dr. Beeson cited the Governor John S. Barry home in Constantine, acquired and maintained as a museum and community house by the Governor Barry Historical Society and Constantine Community Center; the Governor Charles M. Croswell home, owned by the D.A.R. of Adrian; and the Turner residence, now used for the Michigan Pioneer Museum, in Lansing.

Among the questions considered was the problem of making such historic places available for public inspection. It was suggested that the women of the Junior League might be interested in the work of local historical societies. In addition, young married women, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, members of veterans groups, local luncheon groups, and other active local organizations could be approached for assistance in keeping historic homes and museums open to the public. The historical societies were also urged to attract the interest of young people in their work.

Miss Lena Van Genderen, director of the Three Oaks Historical Museum, talked about the activities of the Edward K. Warren Foundation. A report of her remarks follows:

> The Chamberlain Memorial Museum was the former name of the Three Oaks Historical Museum. It is one of five properties owned and maintained by the Warren Foundation. The others include a tract of three hundred acres of virgin timber, the Warren Woods. Until recently the Foundation owned a tract of Lake Michigan beach and dune land. The bathing beach has been deeded to the State, and the dune land has been leased to the State and will become the new Warren Dunes State Park.
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> The Memorial Museum, organized in 1917, will be thirty years old this year. The present building has been occupied since 1928. The original name was chosen in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Chamberlain, parents of Mrs. Warren and early settlers of the village. The decision to change the name to the Three Oaks Historical Museum was made after the head of the board of trustees was often mistakenly identified as the Mr. Chamberlain for whom the memorial was originally named.
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> The museum building is well adapted to the needs and uses of the Society. A great amount of work has been accomplished since the war. The museum is located in the southwest corner of Berrien County, on State Highway 60, one of the direct routes between Detroit and Chicago.
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> The preservation of Local history is the most important phase of the work of the Foundation. Studies of local history are presented in the museum exhibits. Written accounts and publications on local history are available on the local history shelf. The Foundation attempts to preserve a collection of local newspapers. Many are bound and the staff hopes to arrange for the

binding of other volumes. The village is not as old as some of the surrounding towns. Local newspaper files in the museum date back about 60 years and are comparatively complete.

Published county histories have been collected. Publication of a history of the Three Oaks area was a project completed by the Warren Foundation; other publications include a history of the Congregational Church. A project to come up in the immediate future is the publication of the letters of Henry Chamberlain. The Chamberlain collection includes a description of the raising of a log cabin and letters which reveal details of the dress worn by the settlers in the early period. The papers have served as substantial and informative source materials concerning the history of the Three Oaks area.

The Warren Foundation has cooperated with the local public schools in their program to interest young people in local history. Publications of the Foundation have been used as course text books. Historical pageants presented by students have been encouraged in the schools. An attempt has been made to point out that the history of the people of an area is not a subject of interest to older folks alone.

Reference materials are made available to townspeople by the Foundation. The reference library of the Foundation operates apart from the local library, which is not in the same building. Use of these materials is facilitated by the central housing of the sources in the library maintained by the Foundation.

Bulletins and similar publications of local historical societies were discussed by the Conference. Mention was made of of the publications of the Detroit Historical Society, the Monroe County Historical Society, and the Washtenaw Historical Society. The Dearborn Historical Commission fosters the idea of giving duplicates of historical materials in their possession to the Burton Historical Collection; photostatic copies of some items are also sent to Burton and to the State Library at Lansing.

Dr. Beesen read to the Conference House Enrolled Act Number 16, which offers encouraging support to local historical societies in their efforts to issue publications concerning local history. A section of the amended Act reads as follows:

> The board of supervisors of any county in this state is hereby authorized to raise and appropriate money for the purpose of collecting, publishing, housing or displaying historical materials bearing on the history of the county and for the fostering of any movement tending to further the historical interests of the county.

A complete copy of the Act may be obtained from the Clerk of the House of Representatives at Lansing. (House Enrolled Act No. 16, Bill No. 143, introduced by Rep. Cihak.)

The Conference adjourned at noon to the Michigan Union for a complimentary luncheon genereously tendered this group by the University of Michigan. After physical nourishment was adequately looked after, some intellectual nutriment was offered. Mr. Ernest J. Allmendinger welcomed the Conference to Ann Arbor in the name of the Washtenaw Historical Society, of which he is president. Dr. Beeson then introduced Mr. Erwin C. Zepp, director of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, who read a fact-filled paper descriptive of Ohio's very active historical societies and of the close and happy relationship maintained by them with the Ohio State Historical Society. Mr. Zepp's paper is reproduced herewith, pp. 7-10.

Before the afternoon session of the Conference, the representatives visited the Michigan Historical Collections of the University, located on the ground floor of the Rackham Building. On display in the exhibit cases of the main reading room of the Collections were items concerning various state and local historical societies in Michigan, with special emphasis on the Washtenaw Historical Society, cosponsor of the Local History Conference. Manuscript records of the Eaton and Ingham County Historical and Pioneer Society, and materials from the archives of the Washtenaw Historical Society were outstanding features of the exhibit. These items have been temporarily deposited with the Michigan Historical Collections because the societies do not have their own facilities for preservation of historic materials. Dr. Lewis G. Vander Velde, director of the Collections, extends this service to the historical societies of Michigan which cannot arrange for adequate housing of such items.

Dr. Lewis Beeson announced that the annual meeting of the Michigan State Historical Society will be held next October 12, at Holland. Several events commemorating the Holland celebration have already occurred. The State Historical Commission expects to dedicate a plaque to the Dutch pioneers of the state at the annual meeting in October. Members of local historical societies and all other interested persons were extended an invitation to attend the annual meeting.

A paper by Professor Emeritus Emil Lorch, discussing the restoration of historical landmarks, was read by Mr. E. J. Allmendinger. Professor Lorch's paper will be published in Michigan History, in a forthcoming issue.

A resolution presented by Professor Lorch, seconded by Mr. Robert Larson, of the Dearborn Historical Society, and passed by the Conference, was recorded as follows:

> Resolved, that the secretary of the State Historical Society be instructed and authorized to do anything within his power to obtain the preservation of the John Johnson residence at Sault Ste. Marie.

A resolution proposed by Dr. Alfred Whittaker, of the Detroit Historical Society, and seconded by Professor Lorch, to the effect that the State Historidal Commission investigate the possibility of

publishing illustrated maps which would emphasize historic points of interest in Michigan, was approved by the Conference.

Other subjects considered in group discussion at this time included: the need for textbooks on Michigan history which could be used in the public schools of the state; the establishment of a publication fund raised by the people of the state; the building up of state and county societies; and the need for a union list of Michigan newspapers (following the example of the recent Ohio project of this nature). Mr. Luke J. Scheer, of the Henri Tonty Society, mentioned the program recently launched by the motion picture theater managers of the state to publicize Michigan and its history. A New York firm has been hired to make the sound films, which should attract the interest of audiences throughout the nation as well as stimulate the people of the state to feel pride in their own historical background. Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin might work together for the advancement of a similar program. Mr. Lawrence Thompson reminded the Conference of the need for a complete bibliography of Michigan source materials. Bibliographic information concerning materials published from 1918 to the present time is particularly inadequate. Local publications are not listed at Lansing nor in the Library of Congress, and thus remain unknown to many persons interested in Michigan history. Present bibliographies should be brought up to date and plans made for annual revisions.

Mrs. Mildred McMichaels and Miss Lelia Nelson, officers of the Monroe County Historical Society, presented reports on their society. Mrs. McMichaels expressed her agreement with the remarks made earlier deploring the lack of materials on Michigan history. In her experiences with local history projects in the schools of Monroe, she found the local historical society receiving cooperation from the chamber of commerce in compiling the available source materials. She also stressed the value of the exhibits arranged by the Monroe Museum; these have been viewed by approximately 691 students during the past year. Future plans of the Museum include the erection of a log cabin representative of the early pioneer period. The cabin will be furnished with the home-made articles used by the settlers. Miss Nelson is recording secretary of the Monroe County Historical Society.

Dr. Lewis Beeson announced to the Conference that the State Historical Society plans to inaugurate the policy of awarding certificates to families who have maintained the same farm or residence as a family homestead in Michigan for over a hundred years. The project may be expanded to include awards to families who have maintained the same business in the same Michigan town for more than a hundred years.

Before the Conference disbanded, Mr. Chester Ellison, of the Michigan Historical Commission, suggested that the group should arrange an annual conference on local history. A resolution to that effect was proposed by Mr. Robert Larson, seconded by Dr. R. Clyde Ford, and passed unanimously by those present. Plans will be made for a second Local History Conference, to be held in May, 1948. No decision was made as to the exact date or place of the meeting.

Representatives attending the Local History Conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan, May 16, 1947

Algonquin Club of Detroit - Robert H. Larson, Dearborn
Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library -
Leonard B. Archer, Jr.
Helen H. Eller
Elleine H. Stones, chief
Dearborn Historical Commission - Floyd L. Haight, president
Dearborn Historical Society -
Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Larson
Mrs. F. R. McDonald, president
Detroit Historical Commission - Dr. and Mrs. M. M. Quaif
Detroit Historical Society -
Mrs. R. M. Bates
Dr. Alfred H. Whittaker
Henry Brown, assistant director
Henry Tonti Society - Luke J. Scheer
Leelanau County Historical Society - O. Dale Reynolds, Allen Park
Lenawee County Historical Society -
Mrs. Martha Gorham, Adrian
Mrs. Guy T. Pocklington, Britton
Mrs. Nina Sturtevant, Britton, president
Marine Historical Society of Detroit - R. H. Larson, Dearborn
Mason, Michigan - Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Densmore
Michigan Historical Commission -
Chester W. Ellison, vice-president; Dr. Lewis Beeson, secretary
Dr. R. Clyde Ford, Ypsilanti
Michigan Historical Society -
Dr. Lewis Beeson, secretary
Elleine H. Stones, trustee
Michigan State Library - Mrs. Esther Loughin
Minnesota Historical Society - Lucile Kane, St. Paul
Monroe County Historical Society -
Lelia G. Nelson
Mrs. Mildred S. McMichael
Oakland County Historical Society -
Mrs. Donald E. Adams, Pontiac
Jayno W. Adams, president
Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society - Erwin C. Zepp, Columbus, director
Three Oaks Historical Museum - Lena Van Genderen, director
University of Michigan
Michigan Historical Collections -
Mrs. Jane T. Lemish
Mrs. M. L. Welch
Dr. L. G. Vander Velde, director
William L. Clements Library - Dr. Randolph G. Adams, director
Washtenaw Historical Society -
E. J. Allmendinger, president...Julia Kirchofer
Carleton W. Angell
Mrs. B. F. Burtless
Oscar Eberbach
Mrs. Paul Kempf
Dr. Emil Lorch
Mrs. P. E. Skinner
Mrs. Ray Spokes
Geneva Smithe
Mr. and Mrs. Howell Taylor
Western Michigan College Library - Lawrence S. Thompson

OHIO'S HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

By Erwin C. Zepp
Director, Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society

A discussion of regional, county, and intra-county historical societies in the State of Ohio may be prefaced by a few remarks concerning the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society. The State Historical Society celebrated its 62nd birthday on April 11,1947.

The founders of the Society proposed a broad purpose for the organization "of promoting a knowledge of archaeology and history, especially of Ohio." The program of the Society is effected by a specialized public library in which are preserved books, newspapers, manuscripts, and maps; a museum in which are preserved prehistoric, historic, and natural history materials; and 52 prehistoric sites, historic sites, buildings and monuments which are called State Memorials. The program of the Society also includes extensive research in Ohio history, archaeology, and natural history, an educational program which reaches a large audience through the radio, lectures, and class rooms. The publications program is so planned that the various activities of the Society may be widely known. We stress public relations as an important phase of the work.

The chief aim of the Society is to serve the people of Ohio. It is evident that a large portion of the people are interested in the history of their state. During 1946, 1,400,000 visitors were reported at the State Memorials and the Ohio State Museum. Of this number, approximately 100,000 persons visited the State Museum.

The Society cannot hope to reach all parts of the State, nor can it stress the history of local districts and communities. Therefore, it is important that regional and county historical societies be encouraged. We have on record about 75 local, regional, or special historical organizations in Ohio. Fortunately we have three active regional societies, namely, the Western Reserve Historical Society with headquarters in Cleveland, the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio with headquarters in Cincinnati, and the Historical Society of Northwestern Ohio with headquarters in Toledo. The first two have developed extensive libraries and the Western Reserve Historical Society has, in addition to a large specialized library, a second fine residence which is used as a museum. There are 42 county historical societies named for the counties in which they are located; the program of each is confined to the respective county area. There are also 24 historical groups whose activities are limited to a community, a part of a county, or to special interests.

There are, for example, the Ohio Presbyterian Historical Society, the Huguenot Historical Society, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. The doctors and others interested in medical history have organized a Committee on Medical History and Archives as a section of the State Society. This group has achieved national recognition. The historians in Ohio's colleges and research institutions have organized themselves into the Ohio Academy of History. In addition to

these, there are historical associations whose activities are not necessarily limited to Ohio. Two of these are the Great Lakes Historical Society with headquarters in Cleveland, and the Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen with headquarters in Marietta. The latter was organized to gather and preserve the historical records of inland river transportation. This Association has given more attention to the Ohio River system than to the Mississippi Valley. As this Association grows, its influence may spread and similar organizations may develop in other major valley regions.

Two years ago the Ohio General Assembly enacted a law which authorizes boards of county commissioners to appropriate funds to county historical societies. The introductory clause of this law reads as follows: "for the encouragement of historical societies and for the advancement of the knowledge of the history of Ohio among its citizens." The maximum amount appropriated during any calendar year may vary according to population,- $2,000 annually in counties having a population of less than 25,000; $5,000 in counties have a population of between 25,000 and 100,000; $10,000 in counties having a population of 100,000 to 300,000; and $15,000 in counties of more than 300,000. Population figures are to be taken from the next preceding federal census.

Funds appropriated by boards of county commissioners to an historical society are to be used for the promotion of historical work in the respective county, the collection, preservation, and publication of historical materials, and the dissemination of historical information. They are also to be used in general to defray the expenses of carrying on historical work in the county. The law prohibits the use of such funds for construction of buildings. It also provides that such funds may not be appropriated unless the county historical society is affiliated with and approved by the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society. Senate Bill #240 was approved by the Governor on June 27, 1945, and became effective after the referendum period three months later.

The State Society requires county organizations to be incorporated not for profit under the laws of the State of Ohio; to offer its constitution and by-laws for inspection, and to show in a general way the program which it proposes. Thirteen county societies have become affiliated in accordance with the terms of the law and are approved by the State Society. Several are now receiving county funds for the administration of their organizations. We have records of funds appropriated ranging from $500 to $3,700. It is apparent that many counties which have organizations require encouragement and assistance. There are counties in which no attempt has been made, in so far as we know, to develop organized societies. The encouragement law mentioned above provides an opportunity for more effective organization of county historical societies throughout Ohio.

Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Toledo have active regional organizations. These societies may provide an important nucleus for a state-wide conference of historical societies. We are, therefore, proposing a state-wide meeting which we may call the Ohio Historical Societies Conference. Several small groups have met and discussed this proposal. Your program here today suggests the same kind of state-wide organiza-

tion. We have been asked to tell you about our experiences. May we take home some helpful suggestions?

The Stark County Historical Society, the county in which Canton is located, was recently organized. Its president is a member of the Board of Trustees of the State Society. It receives a substantial appropriation from the board of county commissioners. The program of the Society emphasizes collection and preservation of printed matter and manuscripts. An active and well trained secretary will soon undertake a publications program. The local newspapers and radio station have been very cooperative; in fact, a weekly radio program provides local listeners with information about the history of the communities, townships, and people in the county. It is an effective means for the dissemination of historical information.

Across the state in southwestern Ohio is Warren County. The Warren County Historical Society is also recently organized. Records of World War II have been made, and publication of a comprehensive report concerning these activities is proposed. Marking of historic sites is part of the program. Lebanon, the headquarters, is an historic-minded community.

An historical pilgrimage has been planned for June 7 and 8 by the Warren County Society. More than 20 houses in Lebanon and adjoining communities will be open to the public during these days. The State Society administers two properties in Warren County. Glendower, an historic house of the 1830-40 period, will be included in the pilgrimage. The Fort Ancient Museum, in which prehistoric Indian material is exhibited, will also be included in the tour. The Warren County Society is interested in museums. The Society purchased and transferred to the State the historic house mentioned above and assisted in the restoration and furnishing of the house.

These two county societies illustrate the kinds of programs which may be developed. County historical societies are advised not to undertake the administration of extensive physical properties unless they are well established. We recommend the collecting of manuscripts and other local records which the State Society cannot reach. We urge the conservation of industrial and agricultural records,- not only the early ones, but also current records. Items which are now readily available soon disappear. We suggest also that the biographical records of county and community leaders be assembled. Genealogical records also fit into a county historical program very well. The State Society also stresses publications. County historical groups can supplement the state program. This is an important part of the work which is too often neglected. Several Ohio groups issue current publications which report their activities, and since they are all membership organizations, such publications are desirable as a means, often the only one, by which a majority of the members may learn of the work of their organization. The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, under the new program, serves as a clearing house for news regarding the local societies.

One intra-county historical society in Ohio, organized not more than six months ago, now has a membership of 560 persons; we have urged the officers to publish a report before the end of this year.

The community in which that society was organized has a population of about 1,200.

The State Society recently published a 6-volume History of Ohio. It is the most comprehensive Ohio history available today. Sets have been distributed to more than 1,800 Ohio libraries. We have proposed that county histories be written and published. The Ohio History may well be the standard for this kind of publication. We hope that one of Ohio's active local organizations may soon undertake this project.

County historical societies should consider history programs in the schools. We believe that the average school youngster is not too well acquainted with the history of his county. An activity of this kind offers something constructive to the members and the community. A few societies in Ohio are giving this kind of service to county and city schools. Ohio has many universities and colleges. The State Society is developing a broad program under which the history departments of these schools may become better acquainted with the services which we can render. We depend upon a number of history instructors in these schools to assist us in our publications program.

We are beginning to realize that there is a tremendous amount of drama connected with all historical events. If we are to interest large groups of citizens, it is best to dramatize whenever possible. The State Society cooperates with local organizations in promoting centennial and sesquicentennial programs, for example. At some of our State Memorials, historical pageants and other special events are featured each year for the respective communities. On May 18, the State Society memorializes Lafayette's visit to OUR HOUSE, an historic tavern in Gallipolis. The Gallia County Historical Society, the D.A.R., and local service clubs are joining in this program. The Consul General of France will be the featured guest. Also invited are a number of French war brides and descendants of the original French Five Hundred.

The State Historical Society cannot reach all the counties and communities in Ohio. We must therefore depend upon the county and regional historical societies to bridge the gap. In the future, the continued development of all state historical societies will depend to a great extent upon how state historical interests at large are managed. We in Ohio realize the potentialities; we wish to be helpful to others and know that our own organization will in turn be made stronger.

Ann Arbor, Michigan
May 16, 1947